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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS, U.S. BEEF IMPORTS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage December 17 on the fourth round of cross-Straits negotiations, which is scheduled to be held in Taichung from December 22 to December 24; on cross-Straits relations; and on the new Secretary-General of the KMT and DPP, respectively. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed two opinion surveys conducted recently on cross-Straits relations. The article said the surveys showed that it is the will of the Taiwan people to move from the current status of maintaining the status quo to independence, which is opposite to Ma's goal of ultimate unification with China. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" also said Ma does not have the authority to determine Taiwan's future. With regard to U.S. beef imports, an editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said now that the DPP has won the December 5 local elections, all the controversy caused by the Taiwan government's decision to open its market to U.S. beef and beef products should come to an end. End summary.

## 12. Cross-Straits Relations

### A) "Poll Survey Figures Talk -- Opposition to China's Annexation"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] editorialized (12/17):

"... Judging from the [recent] poll surveys done by 'CommonWealth' magazine and National Taiwan University, one can easily tell that it is indeed the will of the Taiwan people to maintain the status quo [for the time being] and then move toward independence. To sum up, it is the choice made by the majority of the Taiwan people to move from the current status of maintaining [Taiwan's] independent sovereignty to [becoming] a completely normalized country. In other words, moving from the current [status] of de facto independence to de jure independence is the only road that the leader of Taiwan, a democratic country that puts the democratic rights in the hands of its people, must do in order to carry out the will of his people.  
...

"... If 'no unification' and 'no independence' weigh equally in Ma's heart, shouldn't he respect the will of the Taiwan people and thereby create a climate favorable for carrying out the will of his people? The fact that Ma constantly bears ultimate unification in mind and is thinking of the one-China common market all the time is sufficient to prove that he stands on the opposite side of the [Taiwan] people's will; Ma's will is to unify [with China]. ..."

### B) "Ma Remains Oblivious to the Public"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/17):

"Rushing to respond to President Ma Ying-jeou's recent interview with the Wall Street Journal in which he was quoted as supporting a timetable of 10 years for Taiwan and China to consider unification, the Presidential Office on Tuesday said that the president had been

misquoted. ... The crux of the controversy is: What gives Ma the authority to set a timetable of any duration for Taiwanese to consider unification with China? The decision on Taiwan's future -- be it independence, unification or the 'status quo' -- lies in the hands of Taiwanese. It is not a subject that the Taiwanese people have authorized the president to decide unilaterally, nor a subject that should be influenced by what people on the other side of the Strait believe. During campaigning and when delivering major speeches, Ma often states that 'Taiwan's future should be decided by its 23 million people.' This wording sounds democratic and shows respect for the idea that Taiwanese should determine the country's fate. Ma's remarks in the Wall Street Journal interview, however, confirm that he wants eventual unification with China. ..."

### 13. U.S. Beef Imports

"Is the Beef War Finally Coming to an End?"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/17):

"Now that the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has won the important local elections, the beef war, triggered by the conclusion of a protocol signed on Oct. 22 for importation of bovine products that may cause spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow disease, seems to be coming to an end. ... The opposition party gathered 129,065 signatures to have its referendum proposal endorsed. But it's going to be very difficult to collect more than seven times as many for the second round -- at the request of the commission -- to have the referendum adopted. By far the great majority of people on Taiwan are non-beef eaters. They have no fear of infection because they don't eat beef and will stay away from the polls. None of the six referendums called in 2004 and last year were validated because less than half of the eligible voters took part due to lack of interest. ...

"All this means the amendments will be deliberated on and a compromise may be adopted before the Legislative Yuan adjourns for the winter in February next year. The opposition would be happy to negotiate a compromise with the ruling party, its legislative caucus whip said. The amendments would ban risky imports, but do not entail renegotiation of the protocol, which KMT lawmaker Hwang Yih-jiau, who proposed one amendment, said can be overridden by legislation. It's time to end the totally unnecessary war so that both the KMT and the opposition party may get on with their respective campaign for the mayoral elections in five special municipalities, three of them newly created. ..."

STANTON